

# MOUNTAIN LION SAFETY

Generally, mountain lions are calm, quiet and elusive. They are most commonly found in areas with plentiful prey and adequate cover. Such conditions exist within Hollister and San Benito County. Mountain lions are an important part of the ecosystem, helping to keep deer and other prey populations in check. Although lion attacks are rare, they are possible, as is injury from any wild animal. Even so, the potential for being killed or injured by a mountain lion is quite low compared to many other natural hazards. There is a far greater risk, for example, of being killed in an automobile accident with a deer than of being attacked by a mountain lion.

We offer the following recommendations to increase your safety, as there are occasional mountain lion sightings in Hollister and greater San Benito County area.

## If you see a mountain lion:

- **Stay calm.** Hold your ground or back away slowly. Face the lion and stand upright.
- **Do not approach a lion.** Never approach a mountain lion especially one that is feeding or with kittens. Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- **Do not run from a lion.** Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If you have small children with you, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.
- **Do not crouch down or bend over.** Biologists surmise mountain lions don't recognize standing humans as prey. On the other hand, a person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. If you're in mountain lion habitat, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children.

## If the mountain lion moves in your direction or acts aggressively:

- **Do all you can to appear intimidating:**
  - Attempt to appear larger by raising your arms and opening your jacket if you are wearing one. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice.
  - If looking bigger doesn't scare the mountain lion off, start throwing stones, branches, or whatever you can reach in its direction without crouching or turning your back. Don't throw things *at* it just yet. There is no need to unnecessarily injure the mountain lion. With that said, your safety is of the utmost importance and the National Park Service won't necessarily prosecute you for harassment of wildlife if something you throw at an aggressive mountain lion does make contact. During the initial stages of a mountain lion encounter, the idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.

## If the mountain lion attacks you:

- **Fight back!** Hikers have used rocks to fend off attacking mountain lions. Others have fought back successfully with sticks, caps, jackets, garden tools, and their bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.

**Call 911 to report mountain lion sightings. Call 636-4320 for general information.**